Slow Food®
Slow Food Foundation
for Biodiversity
Slow Food® Uganda
THE BANANA BOOK
DISCOVER UGANDA'S BANANA HERITAGE

Written & Edited by Irene Marocco, Edward Mukiibi, John Wanyu
Contributors Slow Food Chefs' Alliance Uganda, Hanati Kasula, Umar Kityo, Mutwalibi Magolofa Khauka, Dickson Wandukwa
Copyediting Charles Barstow
Layout Alessia Paschetta
Photography Henrique Gobbi Hedler and Fellipe Abreu de Alcântara

Thanks to Intesa Sanpaolo Fund for charitable, social and cultural donations

BANANAS IN UGANDA

Bananas are traditionally the major source of food in central, eastern, and parts of western Uganda: There are bananas suitable for cooking (e.g. *gonja*, *kivuvu*, and all of the varieties collectively referred to as *matooke*); for raw consumption (e.g. *ndiizi* and *bogoya*); and for making beverages (e.g. *kayinja* and *kisubi*). In addition to providing food security, bananas represent an important cultural heritage and have numerous local and traditional functions in the daily lives of many Ugandans. Bananas are generally harvested before they become fully ripe, when they contain more starch and less sugar.

Delicious and highly nutritious, they are prepared in various ways: steamed, baked, boiled, fried, served as chips, French fries, and so on. Bananas are rich in vitamins, minerals, and fiber, and are of great value as a food for children.

The biodiversity of the banana genus, *Musa*, is truly extraordinary: There are about 50 varieties in Uganda (37 of which are presented in this book). It is smart to grow many varieties in a single garden as a defense against diseases and climatic shocks, and in order to target different markets and different consumers, with different tastes and preferences. Income from the sale of fresh bananas and various products derived from bananas helps raise the standard of living in rural communities.

It is vital to preserve this rich banana heritage, which is under threat from the introduction of a GMO "super banana" project.

Do not believe the banana lies:

- "Traditional bananas varieties will be destroyed by bacterial wilt." But bacteria also attack hybrid varieties, and some traditional varieties are more resistant than others.
- "Traditional banana varieties are not nutritious." But traditional varieties have fed people in Uganda for more than 1,000 years!

TERRA MADRE FOOD COMMUNITIES GROWING BANANAS

- Bugonya Kayinja Plantain Slow Food Presidium
- Bukunja Growers of Bogoya Banana, Vanilla, Cacao, and Coffee (BoCoVaCo)
- Miale Nyasaland Coffee Growers and Gardeners
- Ntanzi Coffee Growers and Gardeners

Slow Food® Uganda

SLOW FOOD UGANDA OFFICE
Josephine House, Plot 218, Kayunga Road
P.O.Box 259, Mukono
T. +256 200906662/+256 392178204
info@slowfooduganda.org
www.slowfooduganda.org

NAKITEMBE
(BLACK AND RED)
ARK OF TASTE

NAKITEMBE - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Ntanzi Coffee Growers and Gardeners

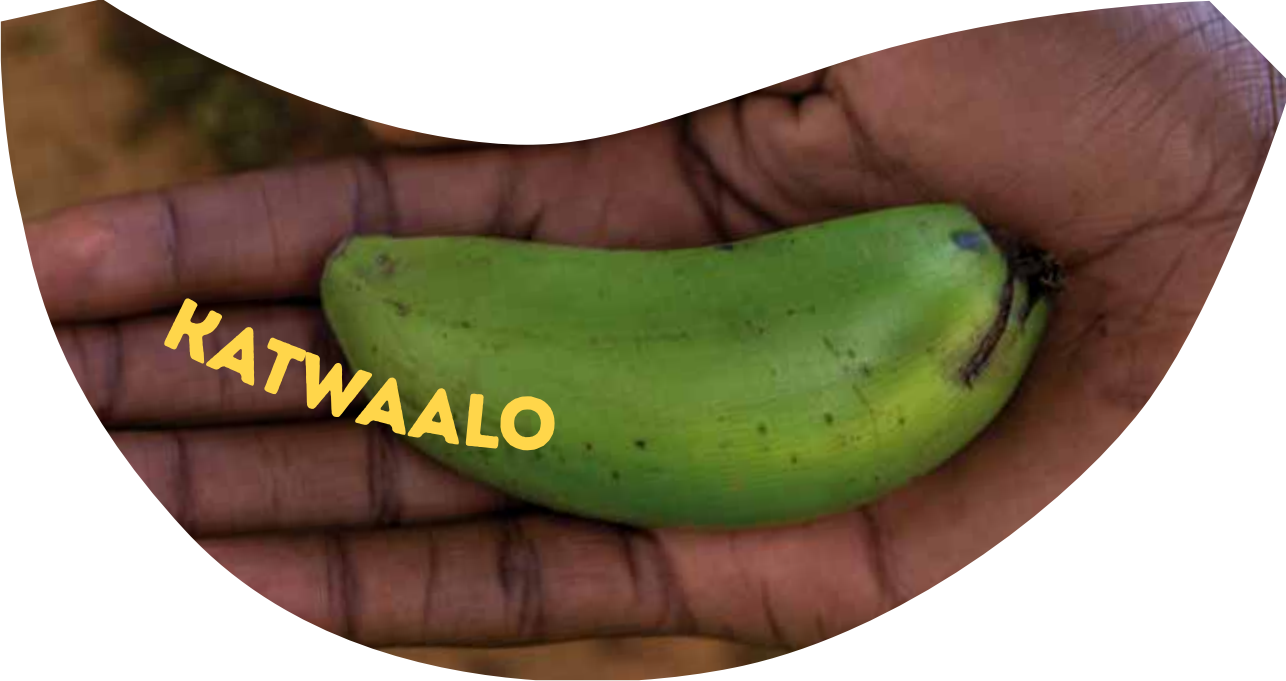
Bukunja Growers of Bogoya Banana, Vanilla, Cacao, and Coffee (BoCoVaCo)

Commonly steamed in banana leaves, smashed, and served with any kind of meat- or vegetable-based sauce.

OUTSIDE The fruits are yellowish green, medium thick (as compared to kivuvu, for example), and less curvy than other varieties. There are two types of nakitembe, black and red: Black nakitembe trees have black stems, while red nakitembe have red stems.

LENGTH 10-15 cm

INSIDE The flesh is ivory yellow with a waxy, slippery texture. Freshly cut, it smells like cucumber. Mild and starchy.


KATWAALO

KATWAALO – HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Ntanzi Coffee Growers and Gardeners

Bukunja Growers of Bogoya Banana, Vanilla, Cacao, and Coffee (BoCoVaCo)

Commonly steamed, smashed, and served with any kind of meat- or vegetable-based sauce. Once cooked, it tends to cool faster than nakitembe.

OUTSIDE The yellowish-green fingers are short and crescent shaped.
LENGTH 8 cm
INSIDE The flesh is ivory yellow with a waxy, slippery texture. Freshly cut, it smells like cucumber. Mild and starchy.

NDIBWABALANGIRA

NDIBWABALANGIRA - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Bugonya Kayinja Plantain
Slow Food Presidium

Commonly steamed, smashed, and served with any kind of meat- or vegetable-based sauce. It is traditionally consumed by people with high social status (chiefs and leaders of the Buganda Kingdom) and princesses.

OUTSIDE It has long, straight fingers. The younger fingers have a bright green color that gradually becomes pale as the fruit matures.
LENGTH 15 cm
INSIDE The flesh is moist but firm, has a yellowish color, and, like other cooking bananas, is full of sap. It is a particularly sweet banana, which is one reason why it is traditionally served to the royal family.

NTIKA
OR TIKHA
EARTH MARKETS

NTIKA OR TIKHA – HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Miale Nyasaland Coffee Growers and Gardeners

Commonly steamed, smashed, and served with any kind of meat- or vegetable-based sauce.

OUTSIDE Silver green, slightly bent, with strong ribs.
LENGTH Over 15 cm
INSIDE The flesh is ivory yellow with a waxy, slippery texture. It is as sweet as ndibwabalangira. Since it is processed green, this banana is sappy, moist, and firm.

MUZIRANNYAMA

MUZIRANNYAMA – HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

OUTSIDE The fingers are yellowish green, rather short and straight, and have no ribs.
LENGTH 8-10 cm
INSIDE The flesh is reddish white and has a waxy, slippery texture and a sappy smell. Mild and starchy.

MUSAKALA

MUSAKALA - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Bugonya Kayinja Plantain
Slow Food Presidium

Ntanzi Coffee Growers and Gardeners

Eaten steamed.

OUTSIDE The fingers are curved, long, and yellowish green.
LENGTH 10-13 cm
INSIDE The flesh is ivory yellow with a waxy, slippery texture. It contains a lot of sap even at full maturity. Freshly cut, it smells like cucumber. Mild and starchy.

NAMAHUMBO
EARTH MARKETS

NAMAHUMBO - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Miale Nyasaland Coffee Growers and Gardeners

It is a cooking banana.

OUTSIDE Smooth and green with visible ribs. The fingers form very compact clusters and the stigmas stay attached to the fingers until full maturity.

LENGTH 8 cm

INSIDE The flesh is cream colored and sappy. Mild and starchy.

SIIRA

SIIRA - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Ntanzi Coffee Growers and Gardeners

Bukunja Growers of Bogoya Banana, Vanilla, Cacao, and Coffee (BoCoVaCo)

It is prepared like other cooking varieties (steamed or boiled) but must be served immediately because it hardens once cooked.

OUTSIDE Yellowish green, rather straight, no ribs at full maturity. Medium-sized.
LENGTH 8 cm
INSIDE The flesh has a coconut cream color. Mild and starchy.

ΜΠΟΛΟΓΟΜΑ

MPOLOGOMA – HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Eaten steamed.

OUTSIDE Dark green, short and stocky.
LENGTH 8 cm
INSIDE It has yellow flesh and contains a lot of sticky sap. It smells like cucumber.

SOOLAGWESAZAALA

SOOLAGWESAZAALA - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Ntanzi Coffee Growers and Gardeners

Eaten steamed.

OUTSIDE Slightly edged fingers in compact bunches. The name soolagwesazaala refers to the fact that its fingers are too small to nourish even a few people.

LENGTH 6 cm

INSIDE The flesh is sappy and has a coconut cream color. Mild and starchy.

NAKABULULU
OR IMBULULU
EARTH MARKETS

NAKABULULU OR IMBULULU – HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Miale Nyasaland Coffee Growers and Gardeners

Eaten steamed.

OUTSIDE This is a three-edged banana, silver green in color, with a short, back stigma.
LENGTH 12 cm
INSIDE The flesh is cream-colored. Mild and starchy.

SITAKANGE

SITAKANGE - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Commonly steamed, smashed, and served with any kind of meat- or vegetable-based sauce.

OUTSIDE It is characterized by the fact that the fingers retain the black remains of the perianth, stigma, and style. The fingers are short and green with blunt edges.

LENGTH 8 cm

INSIDE The flesh is white, sappy and slippery but firm. Reminiscent of cucumber.

ZIRUME
OR MBWAZIRUME
EARTH MARKETS

ZIRUME OR MBWAZIRUME – HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Miale Nyasaland Coffee Growers and Gardeners

Eaten steamed.

OUTSIDE Silver green.
LENGTH 8 cm
INSIDE The flesh is white, has a waxy texture, and contains a lot of milky sap. Mild and starchy.

MULWADDE TAYASAMA

MULWADDE TAYASAMA – HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Ntanzi Coffee Growers and Gardeners

Bukunja Growers of Bogoya Banana, Vanilla, Cacao, and Coffee (BoCoVaCo)

A green cooking banana, normally steamed.

OUTSIDE The fingers are light green and fairly straight.
LENGTH 15 cm
INSIDE Milky white flesh. Mild and starchy.

EMBIDDE KABULA

EMBIDDE KABULA - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Always used for making juice and other beverages.

OUTSIDE It is hard to distinguish from cooking bananas apart from its oval-shaped fingers and blunt tip.
LENGTH 7 cm
INSIDE Whitish-gray pulp and sap, characterized by its very bitter taste.

MUVUBO
OR MURULE
EARTH MARKETS

MUVUBO OR MURULE – HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Ntanzi Coffee Growers and Gardeners

Bukunja Growers of Bogoya Banana, Vanilla, Cacao, and Coffee (BoCoVaCo)

Miale Nyasaland Coffee Growers and Gardeners

Eaten steamed.

OUTSIDE Dark green, long.
LENGTH 12-15 cm
INSIDE The flesh is white. Mild and starchy.

KISANSA

KISANSA - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

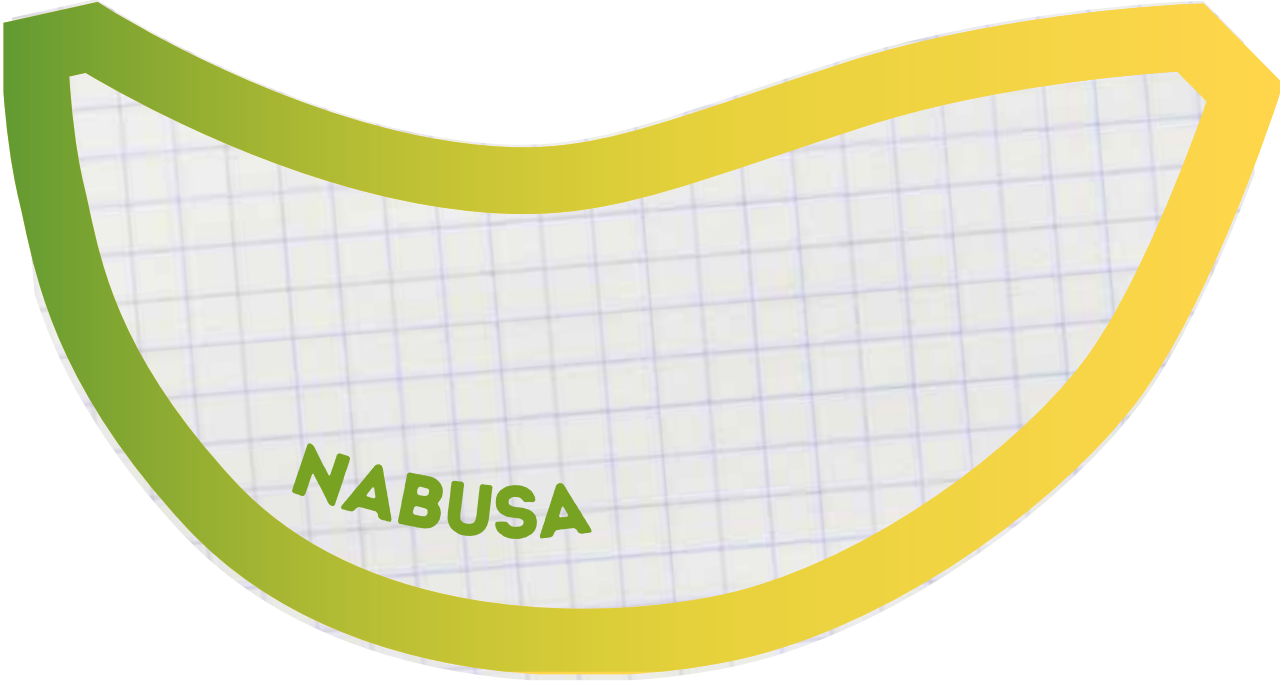
Bugonya Kayinja Plantain Slow Food Presidium

Ntanzi Coffee Growers and Gardeners

Bukunja Growers of Bogoya Banana, Vanilla, Cacao, and Coffee (BoCoVaCo)

Commonly steamed in banana leaves, smashed, and served with any kind of meat- or vegetable-based sauce.

OUTSIDE Gigantic, dark green, kayak-shaped fingers. Clusters are widely spaced. Maximum of six clusters per bunch.
LENGTH 15-20 cm
INSIDE Freshly cut, the fruits are very sappy and stark white. Mild and starchy.

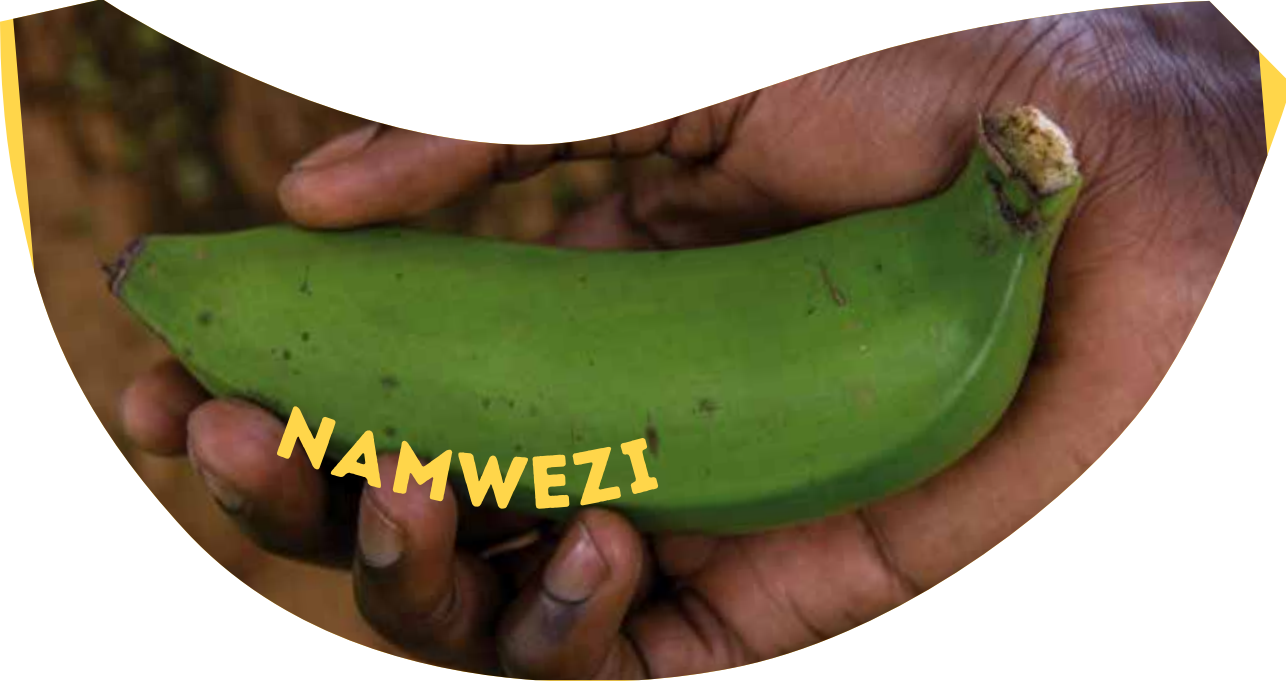

NABUSA

NABUSA - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Ntanzi Coffee Growers and Gardeners

Commonly steamed, smashed, and served with any kind of meat- or vegetable-based sauce.

OUTSIDE Medium-sized, yellowish green. It loses the black remains of the stigma. No ribs at full maturity.
LENGTH up to 12 cm
INSIDE It is yellowish with plenty of sap and smells like cucumber. Mild and starchy.


NAMWEZI

NAMWEZI - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Ntanzi Coffee Growers and Gardeners

Bukunja Growers of Bogoya Banana, Vanilla, Cacao, and Coffee (BoCoVaCo)

Traditionally given to girls during their menstruation period, steamed and served with any kind of meat- or vegetable-based sauce.

OUTSIDE There are no ribs once it is mature. The skin is shiny (namwezi means "feminine moon") and bright green.
LENGTH 11 cm
INSIDE The flesh is whiter than most other varieties. Mild and starchy.

KIBUZI
OR SHIBUZI
EARTH MARKETS

KIBUZI OR SHIBUZI – HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Ntanzi Coffee Growers and Gardeners

Miale Nyasaland Coffee Growers and Gardeners

Bugonya Kayinja Plantain Slow Food Presidium

A green cooking banana, normally steamed.

OUTSIDE Fingers have a leaf-green color at full maturity. The ribs are strong and very visible, forming a pentagonal cross section.
LENGTH 8-12 cm
INSIDE Yellowish, sappy flesh with a smooth texture. Mild and starchy.

KAKUTA KAMU

KAKUTA KAMU – HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Usually prepared unpeeled, as mpogola (or "jacket bananas"). If cooked for more than 20-30 minutes, it easily loses its consistency and palatability.

OUTSIDE The skin is very thin, which is why this variety is given to children: It is easy to peel, unlike other varieties (no knife is required). Medium-sized with very smooth, yellowish-green skin.
LENGTH 7-9 cm
INSIDE The flesh is ivory yellow with a waxy, slippery texture and smells like cucumber.

EMBIDDE ENSOWE

EMBIDDE ENSOWE – HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Ntanzi Coffee Growers and Gardeners

Bukunja Growers of Bogoya Banana, Vanilla, Cacao, and Coffee (BoCoVaCo)

Beverages—fingers are squeezed to extract the fresh juice.

OUTSIDE This banana could easily be mistaken for a green cooking banana. It has a blunt tip and a sausage-like shape.

LENGTH 7 cm

INSIDE The flesh of this banana is whitish gray, and browns quickly when cut. It has a strong, sappy taste and is very sweet when fully mature.

EARTH MARKETS
BOGOYA

BOGOYA - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Ntanzi Coffee Growers and Gardeners

Miale Nyasaland Coffee Growers and Gardeners

Commonly eaten raw as a dessert banana. In times of hunger it is peeled, cut into small pieces, and cooked with groundnut paste to make a stew, or steamed with other cooking bananas to enhance its palatability.

OUTSIDE Fingers are bright green, long, and slightly curved.
LENGTH 15-20 cm
INSIDE Sappy, white flesh. Mild and starchy, but more watery than other varieties.

KISUBI

KISUBI – HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

OUTSIDE The fingers are short and whitish-green.
LENGTH less than 7 cm
INSIDE The flesh of the well-ripened fruit is sweet (it smells like apple and tastes a bit like pineapple).

This variety is used for juice production. The fruits are peeled and squeezed to extract the juice, which is consumed fresh or fermented to make an alcoholic drink called tonto or bwakata. The high-quality juice can be used to produce spirits, but kisubi is such a scarce variety that it is difficult to obtain enough for distillation. In times of drought when there are food shortages, unripe kisubi fingers are peeled, sun dried, and ground to make flour, which is mixed with cassava flour to make a dough locally known as obutta. Kisubi bananas are occasionally made into a sort of pancake. The leaves are used in traditional cooking techniques, such as for steaming foods like luwombo.

NAMALIGA

NAMALIGA - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Ntanzi Coffee Growers and Gardeners

Eaten steamed.

OUTSIDE Slightly curved, green, with very thin skin.

LENGTH 7-9 cm

INSIDE Sappy, white flesh. Mild and starchy, but more watery than other varieties.

KIVUVU
OR MANJAYA OR KIDOOZI

KIVUVU OR MANJAYA OR KIDOOZI – HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Miale Nyasaland Coffee Growers and Gardeners

Mixed with other foods (it is placed on top of the other foods and steamed unpeeled, as mpogola or "jacket bananas").

OUTSIDE It has dull green skin with a powdery whitish coating. The fingers have pronounced edges.
LENGTH The biggest banana of all, with a diameter of about 5 cm and a length of 16 cm.
INSIDE Grayish flesh and plentiful, purplish sap. Very sweet when ripe, tastes like caramel.

EARTH MARKETS
ARK OF TASTE
NDIIZI
OR SUKAARI NDIIZI
OR APPLE BANANA

NDIIZI OR SUKAARI NDIIZI – HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Miale Nyasaland Coffee Growers and Gardeners

Ntanzi Coffee Growers and Gardeners

The ndiizi is either eaten raw, as a dessert banana, or made into pancakes, in which case the mashed up bits of the worst looking bananas are mixed with cassava flour and baking soda or some other leavening agent. When there are food shortages, unripe ndiizi fingers are peeled, sun dried, and ground to make banana flour, which is mixed with millet flour to make a dough locally known as obutta.

OUTSIDE Yellowish green with black spots on the slightly visible ribs.
LENGTH 5-6 cm, the smallest banana of all.
INSIDE The flesh has a coconut cream color. The well-ripened fruits are sweet, smell like apple, and taste a bit like pineapple.

MUFUNYAKONDE

MUFUNYAKONDE - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Fingers are steamed with the skin still on, as mpogola ("jacket bananas"); skin is removed at the moment of eating.
Prepared to celebrate the birth of twins.
Usually served with nakyebowa mushrooms.

OUTSIDE Fingers are very short and yellowish green. Ribs appear as the fruit matures and the stigma falls off at full maturity.
LENGTH 7 cm
INSIDE This banana has primrose-colored flesh. Mild and starchy.

GONJA

GONJA - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Ntanzi Coffee Growers and Gardeners

Bukunja Growers of Bogoya Banana, Vanilla, Cacao, and Coffee (BoCoVaCo)

Mostly roasted when ripe.

OUTSIDE Very long fingers, light green with white spots, ripening to pale yellow.
LENGTH 14-18cm.
INSIDE Very dry with ash-white flesh. Has a mild taste and, when roasted, smells of caramel.

SLOW FOOD PRESIDIUM
KAYINJA
OR NAMUFERI

KAYINJA OR NAMUFERI - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Ntanzi Coffee Growers and Gardeners

Used to make juice, beer, and spirits. The fruits are peeled and squeezed to extract the juice, which is consumed fresh or fermented to make an alcoholic drink called tonto or bwakata. Furthermore, the juice can be distilled to make spirits called waragi, kasese, or mandule.

OUTSIDE Whitish green.
LENGTH 3-6 cm
INSIDE The flesh is white and very sappy, and browns quickly once exposed to air.

The fingers can also be cut into smaller pieces, dried, and crushed to make flour.

NAKAMAALI

NAKAMAALI - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Prepared unpeeled, as *mpogola* (or "jacket bananas").

OUTSIDE The fingers of the first bunches look like those of black nakitembe. Fingers from smaller bunches looks more like nakabululu (silver green).
LENGTH 11-14 cm
INSIDE The flesh is cream colored. Mild and starchy.

NJOGABAKAZI

NJOGABAKAZI - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Ntanzi Coffee Growers and Gardeners

Bukunja Growers of Bogoya Banana, Vanilla, Cacao, and Coffee (BoCoVaCo)

Eaten steamed.

OUTSIDE It is a green cooking banana whose size varies depending on weather conditions. The fingers are green and bulky.

LENGTH at least 8 cm

INSIDE The flesh is cream colored. Mild and starchy.

NAKYEWAGULA

NAKYEWAGULA – HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Commonly steamed, smashed, and served with any kind of meat- or vegetable-based sauce. The steamed fingers are very soft.

OUTSIDE The fingers are rather long and yellowish green
LENGTH 10 cm
INSIDE The flesh is ivory yellow with a waxy, slippery texture. Freshly cut, it smells like cucumber. Mild and starchy.

NAMUNYERE
OR NAMIMWE
EARTH MARKETS

NAMUNYERE OR NAMIMWE – HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Miale Nyasaland Coffee Growers and Gardeners

It is a cooking banana.

OUTSIDE This one has straight, light green fingers with clearly visible edges.
LENGTH 9 cm
INSIDE The flesh is white and sappy. Mild and starchy.

NJOVU

NJOVU - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Eaten steamed.

OUTSIDE The fingers are bulky, have pronounced edges, and are more conical than muvubo for example). The skin is tender.
LENGTH 16 cm during the rainy season, 8 cm in the dry season.
INSIDE The flesh is soft and has a creamy yellow color. Mild and starchy.

KUFUBA
EARTH MARKETS

KUFUBA - HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT

Miale Nyasaland Coffee Growers and Gardeners

Eaten steamed.

OUTSIDE Slightly curved with visible edges.
LENGTH 8 cm
INSIDE The flesh is white. Mild and starchy.

WHAT OTHER VARIETIES DO YOU KNOW?

Thanks to
Intesa Sanpaolo Fund for charitable,
social and cultural donations